

# Indiana House of Representatives

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## News and Information

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### **STATEHOUSE REPORT FROM REP. DAVE CROOKS**

INDIANAPOLIS – As the first month of the 2005 session of the Indiana General Assembly draws to a close, most of the legislative process is focusing on the actions of committees in both the House and Senate.

The governor has detailed his priorities for action in his State of the State speech. In the weeks to come, lawmakers will take action on bills that outline those priorities, as well as legislation that covers a variety of subjects and issues of interest to House members.

Since this is a long session, we will have time to give many of these ideas a full hearing. House members must complete committee action on the 859 bills and 18 joint resolutions filed in our chamber by February 24.

In the weeks to come, committees will debate and vote on the major issues of this session, including the new biennial state budget, a proposed plan to finance a new stadium for the Indianapolis Colts, economic development measures and daylight-saving time.

We also will have time to discuss other concerns, including several proposals to continue to combat the problems associated with the production and use of the drug methamphetamine, changes in the way road funding dollars are distributed in Indiana, and whether the ISTEP test should be moved to the spring.

There has been a steady stream of activity on the House floor. Here are several measures of note that have received approval.

House Joint Resolution 4 provides a constitutional right to hunt and fish. This resolution, which comes in apparent response to a growing anti-hunting movement, provides that people have the right to hunt and fish and harvest game because they are a valued part of our heritage. This amendment would not give hunters and fishermen the right to go on another person's property without permission. They still must comply with all laws and regulations pertaining to guns, hunting and fishing.

If HJR 4 is approved by the Legislature this year, it must be submitted again to the next Indiana General Assembly, either in 2007 or 2008. If it is approved at that time, the voters of Indiana must approve the change in a referendum, probably in 2008, before it will become part of the Indiana Constitution.

While I support this effort, I was disappointed that the House majority voted down a measure that would have amended the Constitution to prevent school corporations from charging fees. If this amendment would have become law, parents would not have to be forced to pay for the textbooks their children use at school. This move would save many families hundreds of dollars each year and meet the constitutional requirement of a free public education.

There are at least two measures under consideration that will help promote efforts to save the Crane Naval Surface Warfare Center. I am the author of one proposal (House Bill 1239) that will allow officials in Daviess, Martin and Greene Counties to work together to create certified technology parks near the Crane base.

We also continue to work on bills that enhance our economic development efforts. House Bill 1182, which was passed by the House this week, makes the state's Tax Increment Financing (TIF) program permanent. Without action, the

program would have gone out of existence at the end of this year.

The TIF program enables local units of government to create special districts in order to attract new economic development. Within these districts, incentives are provided to attract new businesses. Infrastructure improvements such as streets and sewers are completed at little or no cost to those companies located in the districts. Any new tax revenues generated as a result of the new development are used to pay for improvements within the district. They are not used to pay for other entities, such as schools.

While I supported House Bill 1182, I would have liked to have seen House Bill 1182 contain some way for state and local officials to determine the effectiveness of the TIF program. There was an effort to provide some accountability by asking for regular reports that detailed the numbers of jobs created in TIF districts and the impact lost property tax proceeds has on school corporations in those areas. The House majority voted against that proposal.

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